

Older Adults and Severe Heat

Older adults, individuals with illnesses, and small children are especially prone to heat related complications. As summer weather approaches, seniors, their family, friends, and caregivers should be aware of the risks to older citizens during excessive hot weather.

Heat Related Illnesses can occur suddenly. Treat the following symptoms by seeking a cool, well ventilated location, apply cool water to the skin, and sip water slowly:

- increased body temperature
- hot and dry skin
- strong, rapid pulse or weak and shallow pulse rate
- throbbing headache
- dizziness
- nausea and/or vomiting
- fainting
- heavy sweating
- weakness
- skin cold, pale and clammy

Heat Stroke is a Severe Medical Emergency - Seek help emergency medical treatment immediately if you or another person is experiencing the following symptoms!

- high body temperature (106 degrees or higher)
- extremely hot and dry skin
- rapid and strong pulse
- confusion
- possible unconsciousness

Older people don't adjust well to extreme heat due to the body's decreased ability to regulate temperature. Medications can also affect an older adult to tolerate heat, therefore causing the heart to become overworked in its efforts to assist in the body's cooling system. It's a good idea for friends, neighbors, and relatives to check in on seniors more frequently during extreme temperatures.

The Frederick County Department of Aging recommends seniors consider the following suggestions when dealing with extreme heat situations.

- Drink plenty of water. Drink 2-4 cups of fluid per hour. If you are going out, take a water bottle with you. Avoid drinks with caffeine, lots of sugar and alcohol.
- Eat smaller, lighter meals more frequently.
- Limit use of stove and oven.
- Keep your home cool with air conditioning or a fan. If you don't have air conditioning or a fan, go to a place that does; such as your local senior center, library, or the mall.
- Wear loose fitting, lightweight clothing.
- Take cool shower or bath.
- When outside, wear a hat and sunscreen.
- Avoid exercise or exertion, especially during the hottest parts of the day.
- Take frequent breaks.
- Consult your doctor about your medications, especially diuretics or antihistamines, and the effects of sun and heat.
- Never leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle, even for a short time.